



## OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Commissioner Blatchford testifies on hazard issues**

(Washington, D.C., July 12, 2005) Today in Washington D.C., Commissioner Edgar Blatchford testified before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Water and Power regarding Senate Bill 49 and Senate Bill 1338. A Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources chaired by U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski.

Senate Bill 49, is sponsored by Alaska's congressional delegation and supported by the State of Alaska. It would create a seven-member commission authorized to conduct studies of flood and erosion processes in Alaska and make recommendations on how to reduce or avoid flood and erosion problems in the state. The commission, as proposed, would be co-chaired by the Governor of the State of Alaska and an appointee by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Additional members would include three appointed by Alaska's governor, one appointed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and one appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Defense. The commission would work to improve coordination and consultation between state and federal governments in making resource allocation decisions.

Commissioner Blatchford said his role is to be an advocate for all Alaskans so future decisions can be made with accurate data and for the benefit of residents. "Right now we do not see the federal, or state governments as having direct programs, roles or leadership in addressing erosion," Blatchford's testimony stated. "Flooding and floodplain management—yes, but not erosion."

Blatchford said the seven-member commission formed by SB 49 would have the program authority to help provide avenues for addressing the most at-risk communities. And, in some rare cases, move the community if it determined it is the most cost effective, socially acceptable solution available. Primarily the

commission would help guide future spending to avoid building new projects in precarious floodplain and erosion-prone areas.

Commissioner Blatchford went on to lend the State of Alaska's support for U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski's newly introduced Senate Bill 1338 "Alaska Water Resources Act of 2005." His comments related specifically to the lack of stream gages used for flood forecasting in Alaska. He encouraged congress to fund the stream gage deficit our state faces. The data collected from stream gages is used in flood map updates—the Dept. of Commerce, Community and Economic Development leads the state's effort in modernizing flood hazard maps.

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